

# BWC Strategy Session

## The Data Are In – BWC Gets Results

On April 14 and April 26, 2006, Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> held Strategy Sessions to present findings in the *Best Workplaces for Commuters Progress Report*. The following is a combined summary of both calls. Robin Snyder and Patrice Thornton, EPA's program managers, chaired the calls and guided the participants through the program's accomplishments.

### Key Points

#### Program Growth

- Since 2001, 1,443 employers have received the Best Workplaces for Commuters designation, including more than 89 FORTUNE 500 companies. The list grew by 25 percent in 2005.
- More than 300 organizations are BWC Network members.
- Approximately 2.1 percent of the U.S. workforce is eligible for commuter benefits at Best Workplaces for Commuters. These employers represent less than 0.02 percent of the nation's employers.
- Commuters taking advantage of these benefits have saved 389 million gallons of fuel and have prevented 3.4 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions since 2001.
- The Best Workplaces for Commuters program has a national audience—42 states have at least one designated employer.

#### Best Workplaces for Commuters Survey Results

- Best Workplaces for Commuters is responsible for a 15 percent shift from drive-alone commuting to transit, vanpools, and carpools among

employees working for designated employers.

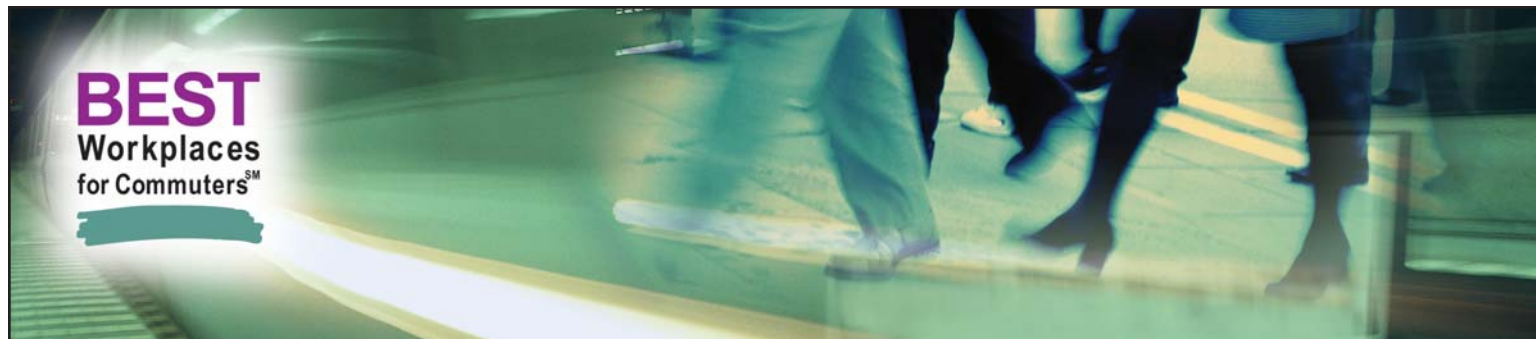
- In addition, contractors and temporary employees working at these same worksites had a drive-alone rate 7 percent less than the average commuting behavior for all commuters working in the same zip codes. This data represents a remarkable trend and constitutes the most significant data in the *Progress Report*.
- The survey results are supported by the Transportation Research Board's 2005 study entitled *Analyzing the Effectiveness of Commuter Benefits Programs*. The study found that when employers provide commuter benefits, transit agencies see a 10-60 percent increase in ridership.

#### Promoting Best Workplaces for Commuters

- The Best Workplaces for Commuters team has increased the number of qualified employers by targeting specific industry sectors that are more receptive to offering commuter benefits.
- Encouraging business districts to become BWC Districts can influence a large number of employees within the district to use alternative forms of transportation.
- The rising cost of gasoline provides another incentive for employees to seek commuter benefits packages.
- Offering commuter benefits reduces the costs associated with parking, including construction and maintenance.

#### Open Discussion

Marci McGuire from Bishop Ranch congratulated the Best Workplaces for Commuters team on the



program's success. Ms. Thornton noted that the accomplishments are the result of collaboration with the dedicated BWC Network members and designated employers. Ms. McGuire also asked how EPA calculated emissions reductions data. Erik Herzog from EPA explained that the data are based on the number of commuters eligible for commuter benefits and therefore are not exact. Mr. Herzog also volunteered to calculate emissions data for Ms. McGuire.

A participant from Research Triangle Park asked for suggestions on how to recruit employers located outside of a transit system's service region. Ms. Snyder suggested that these employers could qualify if they offer significant telework programs, carpool incentives, or vanpool subsidies. Mr. Herzog suggested that employers offering more than one incentive program can further reduce single occupancy commuting.

Lynn Frank from the Office of Transit in Minneapolis asked if there were any data on the number of employers who offered commuter benefits before the Best Workplaces for Commuters designation was available. Ms. Thornton replied that she would look for statistics on employers who offered commuter benefits prior to 2001.

Ms. Frank asked whether Best Workplaces for Commuters was responsible for the 15 percent shift from drive-alone commuting to transit, vanpools, and carpools among employees working for BWC employers. Ms. Thornton confirmed this statistic from the 2004 EPA survey.

Barbara Disser from the Boeing Company-Mesa pointed out that Boeing's commuter survey had been limited to full-time employers, and did not include

onsite contractors. Ms. Disser explained that because Boeing has a large number of contractors, the number of employees using alternative forms of transportation is higher than their survey reflected, and this may be the same for other Best Workplaces for Commuters.

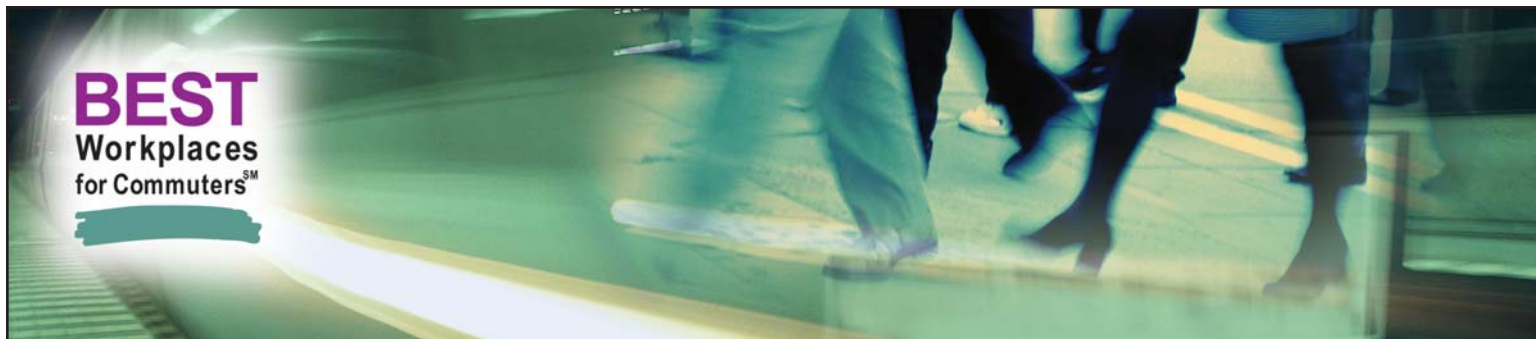
Tammy Ford from TMA Delaware explained that two Delaware employers had received the Best Workplaces for Commuters distinction since 2004. Ms. Thornton replied that the map showing the national reach of Best Workplaces for Commuters would be updated to reflect Delaware's employers.

A participant asked, in reference to the snapshot of Intel's commuter benefits program provided in the presentation, if 90 percent of Intel employees participated in the commuter benefits program, or if the commuter benefits program was available to 90 percent of Intel employees. Ms. Thornton explained that Intel's commuter benefits program was available to 90 percent of its employees.

Ms. Frank asked whether the increase in transit ridership that the Transit Research Board study attributed to employer-provided commuter benefits, applied only to employers who pay the full cost of transit passes, or whether it included employers who pay a portion of the transit pass cost. Ms. Thornton said that she would clarify which employers the study was referring to and provide that information to Ms. Frank.

Ms. Thornton commended Marsha Henry from Occidental Petroleum Corporation for their comprehensive survey results. Ms. Henry explained that persistence is the key to insure that employees take part in surveys.





Ms. Frank asked how Best Workplaces for Commuters could influence employers to offer commuting benefits in employee benefit packages. Ms. Thornton explained that providing commuter benefits increases employee retention.

Ms. Frank suggested that many employers are motivated to become one of the Best Workplaces for Commuters to distinguish themselves from their competition. Ms. Frank asked what else employers would do to become one of the Best Workplaces for Commuters. Ms. Thornton explained that studies have shown that employees are more likely to accept a job with commuter benefits, so it is to an employer's advantage to offer commuter benefits. Ms. Thornton also pointed out that surveys have shown that employers have increased their benefits in order to become Best Workplaces for Commuters.

Ms. Disser shared that Boeing management offers commuter benefits because they save both the employees and the employer money. Ms. Disser

explained that when Boeing started offering a gas subsidy allowance, their vanpool program increased from three to eight vanpools.

A participant requested a synopsis of Ms. Disser's vanpool success story. Ms. Thornton offered to assist Ms. Disser share her experience with the other participants.

Ms. Thornton pointed out that Best Workplaces for Commuters will hold another Strategy Session on May 24, 2006, to discuss the marketing toolkit developed to assist BWC Network members contributing to the Workplaces for Commuters from the FORTUNE 500 Companies list release.

## Closing

The presenters closed the discussions and informed the participants that a summary of the strategy sessions will be available on the Best Workplaces for Commuters Web site at <[www.bwc.gov](http://www.bwc.gov)>.